

Message Text

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ACTION HA-05

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TAGS: SREF
SUBJECT: ARRIVAL 339 BOAT REFUGEES: ACCOMMODATION PROBLEM:
CARPENTER IN HONG KONG

REF: HONG KONG 8525

1. ON JULY 9 A TAIWAN TRAWLER WITH 339 BOAT REFUGEES ON BOARD
ARRIVED IN HONG KONG. IMMIGRATION DEPT PERMITTED 9 REFUGEES
TO PROCEED DIRECTLY TO HOSPITAL AND WILL ALLOW REST OF GROUP
TO LAND UNDER USUAL UNHCR GUARANTEE. APPROXIMATELY ONE THIRD
ARE CHILDREN. ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF GROUP IS ABOUT ONE THIRD
VIETNAMESE AND TWO THIRD SINO-VIETNAMESE. REPORTEDLY REFUGEES
ARE FROM HOI AN AND DANANG. THIS IS LARGEST GROUP TO COME TO
HONG KONG SINCE 1975 AND WITH THIS ARRIVAL THERE IS TOTAL OF
1,602 BOAT REFUGEES IN HONG KONG/MACAU.

2. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, REFUGEES LEFT DANANG IN VARIOUS
GROUPS ON SMALL VIETNAMESE BOATS ON JULY 4 AFTER BRIBING
OFFICIAL IN THAT PORT CITY. THE FOLLOWING DAY THEY
WENT ON BOARD TWO SMALL TRAWLERS WHICH TOOK THEM OUT
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INTO SOUTH CHINA SEA. TRAWLERS SAILED FOR ABOUT TWO
DAYS AND DEVELOPED ENGINE TROUBLE, AT WHICH POINT
REFUGEES WERE PICKED UP BY LARGE TAIWAN TRAWLER WHICH
BROUGHT THEM HERE.

3. REFTTEL REPORTED ARRIVAL LAST WEEK OF 135 REFUGEES ON
BOARD TAIWAN FISHING BOAT. THESE REFUGEES STATE THAT

THERE ARE UP TO 12 MORE TAIWAN FISHING BOATS IN DANANG WATERS AND THAT MORE LARGE GROUPS OF REFUGEES CAN BE EXPECTED TO ARRIVE IN HONG KONG. AT THIS POINT IT SEEMS CLEAR THERE WILL BE MINIMUM 2,000 BOAT REFUGEES IN HONG KONG/MACAU BY END OF JULY. IF WEATHER REMAINS FAVORABLE AND LARGE GROUPS CONTINUE LEAVE VIETNAM FOR HONG KONG, THERE COULD BE 4,000 REFUGEES HERE BY END OF AUGUST IF HONG KONG GOVT CONTINUES PERMITS THEM TO LAND.

4. UNHCR REP CARPENTER ARRIVED HONG KONG JULY 4 AND IS IN PROCESS ESTABLISHING OFFICE ARRANGEMENT. HE IS NOT CERTAIN HOW LONG HE WILL REMAIN HERE, BUT EXPECTS VISIT TO BE AT LEAST SIX WEEKS. AT HIS REQUEST, WE AGREED TO USE SMALL BLUE UNHCR CARDS (SAME AS USED IN MALAYSIA) FOR REFUGEES INSTEAD OF LARGER WHITE UNHCR FORM. USE OF THIS CARD SHOULD HELP CARPENTER CLEAN UP PRESENT LARGE BACKLOG. HOWEVER, UNLESS HE HIRES TEMPORARY OFFICE WORKERS, WE DOUBT THAT HE WILL BE ABLE ACHIEVE CURRENCY. HE REPORTED THAT HE HAS BEEN ABLE SLIGHTLY LOWER HOTEL/HOSTEL COSTS FOR REFUGEES HERE TO APPROXIMATELY \$7.20 DAILY PER REFUGEE. ONE GROUP HOUSED IN VOCATIONAL SCHOOL UNDER CONTROL HONG KONG CHRISTIAN COUNCIL WILL COST APPROXIMATELY \$5.00 DAILY PER REFUGEE.

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5. IT APPEARS THERE WILL BE ANOTHER ACCOMMODATION CRISIS UNLESS CARPENTER CAN QUICKLY FIND NEW FACILITIES OR UNHCR PROMPTLY ACTS ON MACAU OFFER. THE 339 REFUGEES PROBABLY CAN BE ACCOMMODATED BY SQUEEZING THEM INTO EXISTING AND RESERVE FACILITIES, BUT HEALTH DEPT HAS ALREADY COMPLAINED ABOUT OVERCROWDED REFUGEE FACILITIES AND IS PUTTING PRESSURE ON HOTEL/HOSTEL MANAGERS TO REDUCE NUMBERS.

6. HONG KONG GOVT AGAIN EXPRESSED HOPE THAT LARGE GROUPS OF REFUGEES ARRIVING HERE WILL BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION AS NUMBERS UNDER NEW PROGRAM ARE ASSIGNED.
SHOESMITH

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